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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SHIFT AGAINST OEF; BUNDESWEHR
MANDATE MAY BE RENEWED ONLY ONE LAST TIME

REF: 08 BERLIN 1549

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4
(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY. Just weeks after suffering its worst Bundestag election results since the end of World War II, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is showing the first signs of a swing to the left on security policy. According to a senior SPD Bundestag staffer, the party will oppose the renewal of the parliamentary mandate for the Bundeswehr's participation in OEF when it comes up for a vote in December, thereby denying the mandate the broad majority support that German governments usually seek for overseas deployments. While the Chancellery and MFA still plan to seek renewal of the OEF mandate for another year, it appears this could be the last extension. The controversial mandate has steadily lost support since first being pushed through the Bundestag in 2001 by an SPD-led coalition government. END SUMMARY.

SPD SWING AGAINST OEF

2. (C) A senior Bundestag defense policy staffer for the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Axel Schneider, has revealed to us that the SPD caucus plans to oppose renewal of the parliamentary mandate for the Bundeswehr's participation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) when it comes up for a vote in December. Schneider said that eight years after 9/11, the SPD felt it no longer made sense to conduct counterterrorism operations on the basis of the self-defense provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter. It was time to "regularize" OEF through a UN Security Council resolution. In the absence of a new legal basis for OEF, the SPD would oppose renewal of the Bundeswehr's parliamentary mandate.

DENYING BROAD MAJORITY SUPPORT

3. (C) With a majority of the Greens and the entire Left Party already likely to oppose renewal of the OEF mandate, an SPD shift would deny the OEF mandate the broad majority support that German governments normally want for overseas deployments. Chancellor Merkel's Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU) and FM Westerwelle's Free Democratic Party (FDP) together have a clear majority in the Bundestag (332 of 622 total seats). However, if past practice holds, several parliamentarians from both parties will defect from the government line and either vote against the OEF mandate or abstain, making the final margin for passage potentially very thin.

STILL PLANNING TO SEEK RENEWAL

14. (C) Notwithstanding the SPD shift, officials at both the Chancellery and MFA have indicated to us that the new center-right government still plans to seek renewal of the OEF mandate for another year. But this stance does not reflect sincere conviction about the value of the OEF mandate, but rather the reality of dealing with a whole slew of mandates coming up for renewal in December, before the new government has had a chance to thoroughly review them all. In addition to OEF, the mandates expiring next month include ISAF, the EU Atalanta counterpiracy mission, the EU Althea operation in Bosnia and the UNIFIL maritime mission off the coast of Lebanon. This time around, the government plans to roll over most of the mandates unchanged, but will subject them to much greater scrutiny next year.

ONE LAST HURRAH?

15. (C) A senior FDP Bundestag defense policy staffer, Friedel Eggelmeyer, confirmed to us that the new government would probably decide to seek renewal the OEF mandate next month, notwithstanding the threatened SPD opposition, but indicated that this would probably be the last extension. He said that many FDP members shared the SPD view that it was time to bring German participation in OEF maritime operations to an end, which would allow the Bundeswehr to concentrate its limited resources on the higher priority counterpiracy mission. He noted the irony of both the SPD and the Greens opposing a mandate that they had originally pushed through

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the Bundestag in 2001 under former Chancellor Schroeder.

LIMITED GERMAN PRESENCE IN OEF

16. (C) When the OEF mandate was renewed last year, the geographic scope of the Bundeswehr's authorized deployment was significantly reduced to just the Horn of Africa and surrounding waters, thereby effectively restricting its OEF participation to just maritime operations (reftel). Its authorization to deploy up to 100 German Special Forces (KSK) in Afghanistan was eliminated, although the operational impact of that change was minimal since this part of the mandate had gone unused since 2003. In recent years, the Bundeswehr has not had more than 200-300 military personnel in OEF at any given time. Currently, one German frigate and some 235 military personnel are deployed under the mandate.

COMMENT

17. (C) The CDU/CSU has long supported the OEF mandate as a concrete manifestation of Germany's solidarity with the U.S. in the war on terrorism, and has rebuffed efforts by the SPD and others to eliminate it for fear of the negative signal it would send. But CDU/CSU resistance is wearing down. The new coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and FDP calls for a "critical review" of the "multitude" of parliamentary mandates covering Bundeswehr participation in counterterrorism and piracy operations off the Horn of Africa, with a view toward to reducing them. Unless we are prepared to make the case to the CDU/CSU that continued German participation in OEF is indispensable, it seems likely that the OEF mandate will be allowed to lapse in late 2010 after the completion of one additional year in force. The German MOD will welcome this, having suggested for several months now that OEF be eliminated to allow greater resources to be devoted to counterpiracy. While the OEF mandate was approved by an overwhelming majority in 2001, it has steadily lost support in the Bundestag every year since then.

MURPHY